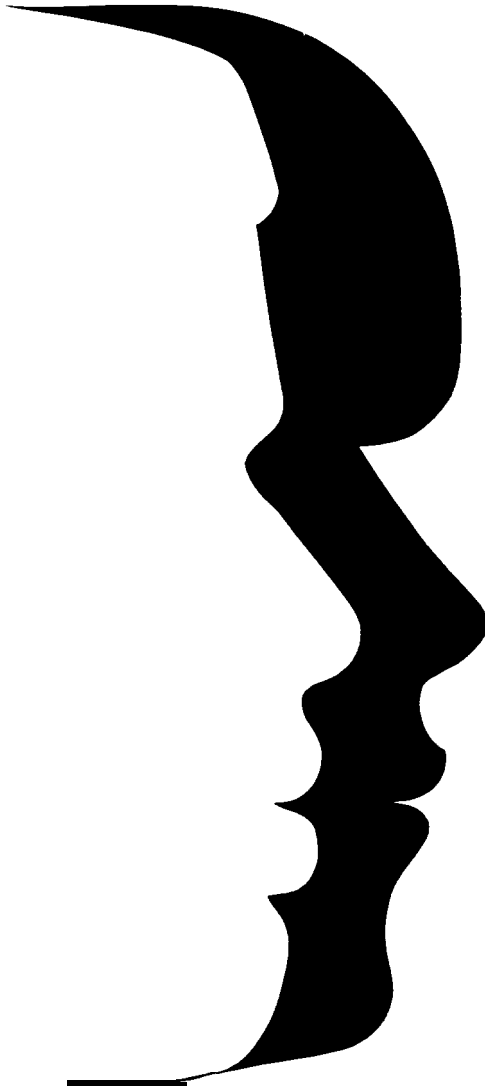


**EPA**

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# **3115- Merit Promotion Program**





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## **PREFACE**

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One of our highest priorities is to make EPA the “Employer of Choice” in the minds of prospective employees. As we move toward the year 2000, we face many new challenges in attracting and retaining a highly skilled, motivated and effective workforce. Consequently, we must ensure that EPA remains at the forefront of new and emerging recruitment trends and techniques to effectively meet these challenges. To achieve this result, it is most critical that recruitment policies be as flexible, user-friendly, equitable and customer-oriented as possible.

The Merit Promotion Program is one of our primary sources for recruiting candidates to meet the Agency’s needs. In conjunction with our emphasis on Total Quality Management, this manual shifts the emphasis in our merit promotion process from centralization to decentralization and the empowerment of its users. As a result, servicing Human Resources Offices will have more discretion to implement procedures which will meet the diverse and changing needs at the local level.

All of our customers---managers, supervisors, employees, and applicants, in addition to human resources, equal employment opportunity and union officials---have an important role to play in ensuring that our merit promotion process works efficiently and effectively. Let us work together to ensure that EPA becomes the “Employer of Choice” as we meet the many challenges which lie ahead.

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Kenneth F. Dawsey  
Director, Office of Human  
Resources Management

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

This manual establishes the Agency's policy for ensuring a systematic means of promoting employees on a fair and equitable basis. The objective of the program is to ensure that all competitive selections in the Agency are based solely on merit and job-related criteria, and without regard to such factors as candidates' race, color, sex, religious, political or labor organization affiliation, marital status, national origin, age or handicapping condition. It is EPA's policy to select the best qualified candidates according to merit and to ensure that all candidates are provided fair consideration for promotional opportunities.

It is the inherent responsibility of managers to seek the best qualified individuals available for each position. To this end, merit promotion is but one means of filling a vacancy. In the exercise of this responsibility and through an assessment of the needs of the organization, managers may elect to fill positions by recruitment alternatives other than merit promotion. Recruitment alternatives include obtaining eligibles by reassignment, change to lower grade, transfers from other agencies, reinstatement, Office of Personnel Management (OPM) registers, EPA delegated examining registers, direct-hire eligibles, appointment of persons with disabilities, veterans readjustment appointments (including disabled veterans who have compensable service connected disability of 30% or more), employees granted priority consideration for placement and reemployment priority list registrants.

When fully-qualified candidates for a position can be found via other means of recruitment, these methods may be properly utilized to the exclusion of the merit promotion process. In all cases, selections should be predicated upon management's needs, as well as the productivity and total objectives of the organization, including affirmative action and equal opportunity goals.

**2. COVERAGE.** This Manual applies to all EPA organizations and covers all competitive service positions at grades GS-1 through GS/GM-15. Non-bargaining unit positions in the competitive service are immediately covered by these instructions. Bargaining unit positions may be covered once a negotiated agreement has been reached with appropriate union officials. Until such time that a negotiated agreement is reached, bargaining unit employees will be covered under their current negotiated agreements. Excepted service positions may be covered at the discretion of the servicing Human Resources Office (HRO).

**3. IMPLEMENTATION**

a. Each servicing Human Resources Office (HRO) will develop a supplemental promotion plan which complies with this manual and FPM Chapter 335. Supplemental plans will provide local guidelines and implementing procedures. Specifically, supplemental plans should include guidelines on rating and ranking candidates; when and how methods of locating candidates will be used; and any other procedures the HRO determines to be necessary. Union negotiations for supplemental plans will be carried out at the local level, where applicable.

b. A copy of each supplemental plan must be sent to the Director, Policy Research and Development Division, OHRM for review prior to implementation.

**4. WHEN COMPETITION IS REQUIRED. Competition is required for the following actions:**

a. Promotion or transfer to a higher grade (unless excluded in section 5 below);

b. Temporary promotion for more than 120 days, except as provided in section 5.d. below. Any prior details to higher graded positions or temporary promotions during the preceding 12 months (whether competitive or non-competitive) must be included when calculating the number of days;

c. Term promotion;

d. Selection for detail for more than 120 days to a higher graded position or to a position with known promotion potential;

e. Selection for training which is part of an authorized training agreement, part of a promotion program, or required before an employee may be considered for a promotion;

f. Reassignment, demotion, reinstatement or transfer to a position with more promotion potential than a position the employee previously held in the competitive service (except when a reassignment or demotion is made to place an employee affected by RIF or in lieu of disability retirement); and,

g. Reinstatement to a higher grade than any grade held in a permanent position in the competitive service.

**5. WHEN COMPETITION IS NOT REQUIRED.** Competition is not required for:

a. **CAREER LADDER PROMOTIONS.** Career ladder promotions are permitted when an employee is appointed or assigned to any grade level below the established full performance level of the position (i.e., the position has a documented career ladder and promotion potential). These promotions may be made noncompetitively for any employee who entered the career ladder by:

(1) competitive promotion procedures;

(2) competitive appointment from a certificate of eligibles (through OPM or delegated examining authority) or under direct hire authority; or

(3) non-competitive appointment under a special authority, e.g., conversion of a cooperative education or Federal Junior Fellowship Program student, appointment of former ACTION Volunteers or Peace Corps personnel, conversion of a VRA appointee and Presidential Management Intern.

b. **PROMOTION EASED ON RECLASSIFICATION WHEN:**

(1) no significant change occurs in the duties or responsibilities and the position is upgraded due to issuance of a new classification standard, an updated AgencyWide classification policy or the correction of a classification error, or

(2) the position is upgraded due to accretion of additional duties and responsibilities and all of the following provisions are met:



(a) *the* employee continues to perform the same basic functions of the former position, the duties of the former position are absorbed into the new position, and the former one is cancelled;

(b) the new position has no known promotion potential; and

(c) the addition of the duties and responsibilities does not adversely affect another employee.

c. **PERMANENT PROMOTION** to a position held under a temporary or term promotion or detail when:

(1) the assignment was originally made under competitive procedures; and

(2) it was known to all competitors at the time that the assignment may lead to a permanent promotion.

d. **TEMPORARY PROMOTION** of an employee for less than 120 days; or for more than 120 days to a grade level previously held on a permanent basis, unless the employee was demoted for reasons related to performance or conduct.

e. **PLACEMENT AS A RESULT OF PRIOR CONSIDERATION** when the referral is a remedy for candidates not given proper consideration in a competitive promotion action.

f. **REDUCTION IN FORCE PLACEMENTS** which result in an employee receiving a position with higher promotion potential.

g. **REPROMOTION OR TRANSFER TO A GRADE PREVIOUSLY HELD** on a permanent basis in the competitive service, except when the employee was demoted for reasons related to performance or conduct.

**h. REASSIGNMENT, PROMOTION, DEMOTION, TRANSFER OR REINSTATEMENT TO A POSITION HAVING NO HIGHER PROMOTION POTENTIAL** than that held Or previously held on a permanent basis in the competitive service.

**i. PROMOTION RESULTING FROM SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF A TRAINING** program for which the employee was competitively selected.

**j. SELECTION FROM THE REEMPLOYMENT PRIORITY LIST** at the same or lower grade level than the position from which separated.

**k. REINSTATEMENT TO ANY POSITION OF** a career or career-conditional employee who served under a career SES appointment.

**6. AREAS OF PUBLICITY (AOP)**

a. An area of publicity (AOP) is the geographic and/or organizational area in which the program or activity directs its search for candidates and from which a reasonable number of high quality candidates can be found to make a selection.

b. Since the AOP targets the group of candidates who will be considered for competitive selection, it is important that it be as broad as practicable in order to uphold the basic merit principles of open competition, equal employment opportunity (EEO) and identification of the best qualified. The AOP is not intended to limit competition. HRO'S should consider any appropriate sources which are likely to help EPA meet its mission and EEO objectives, and contribute fresh ideas and new viewpoints to the organization when establishing the AOP.

c. The area of publicity may be either designated in supplemental plans or established for each vacancy. Supplemental plans must specify how the area of publicity will be determined.

**7. METHODS OF LOCATING CANDIDATES.** Candidates may be located using a wide range of methods which may vary with each vacancy depending upon the area of publicity, the type of position, and other similar considerations. HRO'S will advise management on the appropriate method to use. These methods include:

a. **Vacancy LISTINGS** - A brief summary of multiple positions open to competition under the merit promotion procedures.

b. **INDIVIDUAL VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENTS** - Posted notices which advertise one or more positions open to competition under the merit promotion procedures.

c. **OPEN CONTINUOUS ANNOUNCEMENTS** - Posted notices through which applications may be accepted and referred to selecting officials on a continuing basis. They may be used when there is a continuous need for candidates in a particular occupation or group of occupations.

d. **AUTOMATIC IDENTIFICATION OF CANDIDATES (MC)** - HRO'S may refer all promotion eligibles within a defined area of publicity when a determination is made that there is a sufficient number of candidates to ensure competition. Promotion eligibles under the AIC method would include all employees in the defined AOP who are serving at the next lower grade or the same grade level with less promotion potential than the position being filled, and meet qualification and time-in-grade requirements. A manual or automated listing of all promotion eligibles within the defined AOP will be referred to the selecting official for consideration. Vacancy announcements are not required under this procedure.

**8. PRIORITY CONSIDERATION.** *The* referral of individuals who by law, regulation, settlement agreement or final decision in a grievance or a discrimination complaint must be considered before other candidates. Management must show that the employee received priority consideration for placement. Types of priority consideration include:

a. **REPROMOTION CONSIDERATION ELIGIBLES**. Employees demoted in the Agency without personal cause and are on grade/pay retention are entitled to priority consideration for any vacancies for which they qualify in their local commuting area. Repromotion eligibles are entitled to priority consideration for 2 years, unless they are repromoted to their former grade or decline a position of equal grade, whichever occurs first. Candidates may receive consideration only at the grade level in which consideration was lost.

b. **CANDIDATES WHO DID NOT RECEIVE PROPER CONSIDERATION IN A PREVIOUS MERIT PROMOTION ACTION DUE TO A PROCEDURAL REGULATORY OR PROGRAM VIOLATION**. These candidates will receive priority consideration for the next appropriate vacancy in the geographic location where proper consideration was denied. The following conditions must be met before priority consideration under this provision **may** be granted:

(1) the vacancy occurs within one year of the determination that the employee was not afforded proper consideration;

(2) it is a similar type position in the same pay system as the position for which the employee failed to receive proper consideration;

(3) the employee is qualified for and would have been in the best qualified group; and

(4) the vacancy is at the same grade level with no higher potential than the position for which consideration was lost.

c. **EMPLOYEES WHO RECEIVE PRIORITY CONSIDERATION BASED ON AN EEO COMPLAINT**. These employees must be given priority consideration if it is either the agreed upon resolution to settle the complaint or the remedial action ordered in the final decision of a discrimination complaint.

**9. APPLICATION PROCEDURES**

a. GENERAL. Unless otherwise specified in individual vacancy announcements or vacancy listings, interested persons must submit an APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL EMPLOYMENT (SF-171) and a copy of the most recent performance appraisal. HROS may use alternative, streamlined application forms.

b. ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS. Unless otherwise specified, applications will be accepted from all promotion-eligible candidates whose applications are received in the Human Resources Office by the closing date. Applications may be accepted at any time from noncompetitive eligibles, qualified persons with disabilities, 30% or more compensable disabled veterans, Veterans Readjustment Act (VRA) eligibles, and Public Health

Service (PHS) Officers. Employees within the area of publicity who are absent for legitimate reasons, such as leave, official travel, detail, Intergovernmental Personnel Act (IPA) assignment, training or military service, may furnish copies of their application to another employee or their supervisor and request that they be submitted for vacancies.

**10. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

a. GENERAL. Applicants must meet OPM qualification requirements and any selective placement factors by the closing date of the announcement. Other legal and regulatory requirements (i.e. time-in-grade, time-after-competitive appointment, etc.) must be met within 30 days of the closing date of the vacancy announcement. Applicants responding to open continuous announcements must meet the eligibility requirements at the time the application is submitted to the HRO.

b. MINIMUM QUALIFICATION STANDARDS: Minimum qualification standards will be those described or approved by OPM for the particular position involved, plus any selective placement factors. Selective placement factors must be supportable in the position description as a qualification of the position being filled.

**11 DISTINGUISHING BETWEEN CANDIDATES**

a. Candidates who meet eligibility requirements will be divided into two categories:

(1) **PROMOTION ELIGIBLES** - those applicants who must 'compete in order to be placed in the position; and

(2) **NONCOMPETITIVE ELIGIBLES** - those applicants who are eligible for reinstatement, reassignment, change to lower grade, special appointing authority (i.e., persons with disabilities, disabled veterans, etc.) or other action where competition is not required for placement in the position.

b. Applicants in the promotion-eligible category will be evaluated in accordance with the provisions below. Noncompetitive eligibles will be referred without being rated and ranked. Such referrals may be made any time during the recruitment, evaluation and selection process.

**12. EVALUATION OF CANDIDATES**

a. Applications may be evaluated by a subject matter expert, a rating panel or a personnel specialist. Regardless of the evaluator, ratings must be based solely on the application material submitted by the applicant.

b. When there are more than ten (10) promotion eligibles for a vacancy, all basically qualified candidates must be evaluated on job-related criteria that distinguishes among them (i.e., work experience, education and training, performance appraisals, awards, outside activities, etc.). Evaluation methods should include an analysis of the job to determine pertinent knowledges, skills and abilities (KSA'S) that are important for successful performance. The streamlined evaluation method described in paragraph 13.a. below may be used when there are ten (10) or fewer qualified promotion eligibles for a vacancy.

**c. Managerial and supervisory vacancies must be evaluated in accordance with the procedures outlined in Appendix 1 of this manual.**

**13. RANKING AND REFERRAL OF CANDIDATES**

**a. REFERRAL OF TEN OR FEWER CANDIDATES.** When there are ten (10) or fewer qualified candidates for a vacancy, candidates who meet basic eligibility requirements may be referred to the selecting official without being rated by subject matter experts, panels or personnel specialists. All eligible candidates will be referred alphabetically on a certificate to the selecting official as best qualified candidates.

**b. RANKING AND REFERRAL OF CANDIDATES.** Candidates assigned the highest scores in the evaluation process will be ranked at the top in highest point score order. The “Best-qualified” candidates will normally be determined based on the most logical break (natural break) in scores, as determined by the evaluator. “Best-qualified” candidates will have a score above the “natural break” within the scores of qualified candidates. However, when there is no “natural break” in the scores, all candidates (even if there are more than ten) may be certified to the selecting official on the Merit Promotion Certificate in alphabetical order without reference to the candidates’ numerical rank. Similarly, when best qualified candidates are identified, they will also be referred to the selecting official in alphabetical order without reference to the candidates’ numerical rank.

**c. USE OF CERTIFICATES FOR ADDITIONAL POSITIONS.** Certificates may be used to fill additional vacancies for similar positions up to six months.

**d. REFERRAL OF NON-STATUS APPLICANTS.** Applicants who do not have status in the competitive service may be considered at the discretion of the selecting official. The HRO representative will advise the selecting official on hiring such candidates through direct-hire authorities or OPM registers. Non-status applicants will be referred separately from promotional candidates.

**14. INTERVIEWS AND SELECTIONS**

a. Interviews may be conducted at the discretion of the selecting official. Depending on the local supplemental plan and/or negotiated agreement, the selecting official may interview all, some or none of the referred candidates. In implementing this provision, HRO'S should include procedures in their supplemental plans which will ensure that all candidates are treated in a fair and equitable manner.

b. The selection process is a management prerogative involving the exercise of informed judgement coupled with responsibility. Each selecting official should choose the person(s) who will best fulfill their needs and the objectives of the organization, taking into consideration the Agency's affirmative action goals. Selecting officials are free to select any candidate on the certificate of eligibles or to non-select any and all candidates.

**15. RELEASE AND NOTIFICATION OF APPLICANTS.** HRO'S may work with program officials to establish mutually agreeable release dates based on mission and program requirements. However, selectees will normally be released one complete pay period following the selection. All applicants will be notified of the outcome of announced vacancies.

**16. DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION**

a. Disclosure of merit promotion information will follow guidance contained in the Privacy and Freedom of Information Acts, FPM Chapter 335 and appropriate supplements. All candidates must have equal access to information on the merit promotion process and procedures.

b. Applicants will receive the following information, upon request:

- (1) Whether they were found eligible;
- (2) Whether they were referred to the selecting official;
- (3) Who was selected;



(4) Whether the vacancy announcement was cancelled;

(S) Areas, if any, they should improve to increase their chances for future promotions; and

(6) The applicant's own rating assigned in the evaluation process.

17. **EMPLOYEE COMPLAINTS.** When an employee has a question about a Merit Promotion Program action, the employee should discuss it with a representative of the Human Resources Office. An employee must follow appropriate timeframes and procedures to raise concerns in either the Agency or negotiated grievance procedures or the discrimination complaint process.

18. **NEPOTISM.** Supervisors and public officials as defined in Federal Personnel Manual 310 are prohibited from participating in any portion of any selection process if a relative is under consideration. Within this context, relative is defined as a father, mother, son, daughter, brother, sister, uncle, aunt, first cousin, nephew, niece, husband, wife, father-in-law, mother-in-law, etc., stepfather, stepmother, etc., half brother or sister. Neither supervisors nor public officials may advocate the selection of a relative. If a relative of the selecting official is among the candidates certified for selection, he/she must disqualify himself/herself and the selection authority should be exercised at a higher level in the chain-of-command.

19. **MAINTAINING RECORDS.** Each servicing Human Resources Office is responsible for maintaining a complete record on each merit promotion case for two (2) years or until an OPM evaluation, whichever occurs first. Each record should contain sufficient information to allow reconstruction of the personnel action, including documentation on how candidates were rated and ranked.

20. **PROGRAM EVALUATION.** Servicing HRO'S will be periodically evaluated by the Agency's Quality Assurance and Evaluation Staff for compliance with this manual and supplemental promotion plans.

**EVVALUATING AND SELECTING MANAGERMLJSUPERYISORY CANDIDATES**

**a. BACKGROUND.** EPA has become increasingly aware of the need for a special mix of managerial and supervisory skills if our Agency managers and supervisors are to effectively meet the diverse environmental and work force challenges which lie ahead. Consequently, the Agency has developed a comprehensive management development program which focuses on three areas aimed at ensuring a highly skilled and diverse corps of managers and **supervisors----**i.e., recruitment and selection, training and development, and appraisals and awards. This Appendix focuses on the process to be used in evaluating and selecting managerial and supervisory candidates under the merit promotion process. Detailed instructions are provided in the “Guidance for the Selection of High Quality Managers” in Appendix 4.

**b. BALANCE OF SKILNBROAD-BASED BACKGROUND.** The best qualified candidates for managerial and supervisory positions should have a balance of managerial skills, technical competence and a broad-based background. Supplemental merit promotion plans developed by the servicing HRO must address local procedures for ensuring this balance in filling all managerial and supervisory positions.

Since all candidates must meet basic qualifications requirements which would give them the required technical competence to perform the job, these procedures primarily cover evaluation of managerial skills and broad-based experience.

**(1) MANAGEMENT EXCELLENCE CRITERIA.** HRO’S must ensure that candidates applying for managerial and supervisor positions are evaluated on appropriate management excellence criteria listed below. Although the HRO has the flexibility in determining how to factor the criteria in the evaluation process, at least two of the criteria must be included on each supervisory/managerial vacancy announcement/listing; and applicants must address the criteria in accordance with local HRO procedures. HRO’S may

**EVALUATING MANAGERS/SUPERVISORS. CONT'D**

choose the appropriate management excellence criteria based on the position being filled. Further guidance on the appropriate criteria to use for “managers” versus “supervisors” is provided in Appendix 4.

**COMPETENCIES (WHAT MANAGERS DO)**

- \* Human Resources Management
- \* Supervision
- \* Work Unit Guidance/ Monitoring
- \* Coordination
- \* Work Unit Planning
- \* Budgeting
- \* Contracts/Resources Administration
- \* Program Evaluation
- \* External Awareness
- \* Interpretation
- \* Representation

**EFFECTIVENESS CHARACTERISTICS**

- \* Communication
- \* Interpersonal Awareness
- \* Leadership
- \* Flexibility
- \* Action Orientation
- \* Results Focus
- \* Broad Perspective
- \* Strategic View
- \* Organizational Sensitivity

The criteria may be assessed through quality ranking factors or other appropriate methods developed by the HRO. Many of the “Effectiveness Characteristics” can be best assessed during the interview process. Sample interview questions have been developed and are listed in Appendix 4.

(2) **BROAD-BASED BACKGROUND**. Servicing HRO’S should also ensure that candidates for managerial positions are assessed on their broad base of experience. HRO’S may use discretion in deciding how this assessment will be made, but should give strong consideration to the guidance in Appendix 4. The following are examples of the types of experiences which provide such a background:

- \* Headquarters Regional or field experience
- \* Policy and operations experience
- \* Staff and line experience
- \* Experience in more than one environmental program
- \* Experience in more than one administrative field (budget, finance, human resources)

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- \* Experience in more than one organization, Agency or state/local **government**
- \* Participation in Agencywide task forces or committees
- \* Education, training, or experience with professional associations

APPENDIX 1

**RESPONSIBILITIES**

a. **THE ADMINISTRATOR** is responsible for the Agencywide operation of a sound Merit Promotion Program which conforms with Federal Merit Promotion Policy and requirements.

b. **THE DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT** is responsible for establishing and administering a sound Agencywide Merit Promotion Program that assures that all employees in the competitive service are covered by an appropriate promotion plan.

c. **THE DIRECTOR, POLICY, RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT DIVISION** is responsible for: (1) Developing and issuing promotion policies, requirements, and guidelines; (2) Reviewing supplemental promotion plans developed by HRO'S to insure that they comply with Federal merit promotion policy and requirements; and (3) In cooperation with the Director, Office of Civil Rights, assuring that the Agency's merit promotion program supports and advances equal employment opportunity objectives.

d. **MANAGEMENT/SELECTING OFFICIALS** at all levels are responsible for applying merit principles, including the principle of equal employment opportunity, in filling vacancies and supporting and upholding the integrity of the Merit Promotion Program.

e. **SERVICING HUMAN RESOURCES OFFICERS** are responsible for:

(1) Implementing promotion plans and ensuring their full and equitable application to all affected employees and positions;

(2) Providing technical assistance and guidance to both management officials and employees on all promotion matters;

(3) Taking appropriate action to make sure the best qualified candidates are referred to selecting officials on a timely basis;

**RESPONSIBILITIES CONT'D**

**(4)** Locating and referring high quality candidates to the selecting official;

**(5)** Informing candidates and supervisors in a timely manner of the status of pending actions;

**(6)** Maintaining promotion records as detailed in FPM Chapter 335, Requirement 5;

**(7)** Ensuring that managers and supervisors effectively use and fully understand supplemental promotion plans; and

**(8)** Informing employees of the policies and procedures in the Agency's and Supplemental Merit Promotion Plans;

**(9)** Developing supplemental Merit Promotion Plans.

f. **EMPLOYEES** are responsible for demonstrating that they have the knowledge, skills, abilities, and personal qualifications necessary to qualify for positions for which they desire consideration; for submitting completed forms indicated when applying for vacancies when automatic identification of eligibles is not provided; and for performing the duties of their current positions in a manner which shows that they are ready to be considered for advancement to more difficult work and greater responsibility.

**DEFINITIONS**

**a. CANDIDATES**

(1) **QUALIFIED**. An eligible candidate who meets the qualification criteria in OPM Handbook X-1 18 or X-118C and when used, selective placement factors for the position being filled.

(2) **BEST QUALIFIED**. Candidates whose experience, training and past performance rank at the top when compared with all other qualified candidates and who are normally referred to the selecting official on a merit promotion certificate.

b. **CAREER LADDER PROMOTION**. The noncompetitive promotion of an employee who competed an earlier date and was appointed to an entry level or intermediate position designed to prepare the employees for the full performance level of the position.

c. **CAREER-CONDITIONAL APPOINTMENTS**. Permanent appointment of a person to the competitive service who has not yet completed three continuous creditable years of Federal service.

d. **CAREER APPOINTMENT**. Permanent appointment in the competitive service given to an employee who has completed three creditable years of Federal service.

e. **MERIT PROMOTION CERTIFICATE**. A list of the “Best Qualified” candidates referred to the selecting official for a selection.

f. **COMPETITIVE~ SERVICE**. An appointment to a position in the Federal government which is not specifically excepted from Civil Service laws by Executive Order or OPM regulations.

**DEFINITIONS CONT'D**

**g. COMPETITIVE STATUS.** Status obtained by an employee based on prior service under a career or career-conditional appointment.

**h. DEMOTION.** **The** movement of an employee while serving continuously within the same agency, to a position at a lower grade level within the same job classification system and pay schedule, or to a position with a lower rate of basic pay in a different job classification system and pay schedule.

**i. DETAIL.** **The** temporary assignment of an employee to a different position for a specified period with no change in pay. Normally the employee will return to his/her regular duties at the end of the detail period.

**j. EVALUATION CRITERIA** Knowledge, skills, abilities and other criteria (KSA's) essential for successful performance in a position and used to distinguish among qualified candidates.

**k. FULL PERFORMANCE LEVEL.** **The** grade level designated by management and established by the application of the appropriate classification standard(s), which depicts the highest level of duties and responsibilities normally performed in a particular position.

**l. JOB ANALYSIS.** **The** process of systematically collecting, analyzing and interpreting information about a position to provide a job-related basis for evaluation and selection.

**m. NON-COMPETITIVE ELIGIBLES.** Candidates with or without competitive status for whom competition is not required (for example, certain reassignment, demotion, and transfer eligibles; as well as persons with disabilities, 30% disabled veterans, vRA'S and outstanding scholars).

**n. NON-STATUS (CANDIDATES).** Applicants who do not have career or career-conditional service and whose selection is subject to certification through an appropriate OPM or Agency competitive examining process.



**DEFINITIONS CONT'D**

**o. PROMOTION.** *The change of an employee to a position at a higher grade level or to a position with a higher rate of basic pay*

**p. POSITIONS WITH KNOW PROMOTION POTENTIAL.** *Positions at grade levels below the full-performance level from which career promotions may be made because adequate competition was held at an earlier stage. These include: career ladder positions; apprentice positions; trainee positions; understudy positions; and many upward mobility positions.*

**q. REASSIGNMENT.** *The change of an employee from one position to another without promotion or demotion.*

**r. Reinstatement.** *The reemployment of a former career employee (or career-conditional veteran's preference eligible) any time after separation from Federal employment or of a former career-conditional non-veteran within three years after separation.*

**s. SELECTING OFFICIAL.** *An individual authorized to make a selection for the position to be filled. The selecting official is usually the first or second level supervisor over the position, but may be a higher level official in the chain of command. When several positions are to be filled, more than one selecting official may be designated.*

**t. SELECTIVE PLACEMENT FACTORS.** *Knowledge, skills and abilities not contained in the OPM Handbook X-118 qualification standards that are so essential for satisfactory performance in a particular position that they become part of the qualification requirements in addition to those outlined in the X-118. Selective placement factors are determined by appropriate management officials and are readily identifiable from the position descriptions.*

**GUIDANCE FOR THE SELECTION OF HIGH-QUALITY MANAGERS**

**PURPOSE.** This guidance establishes specific selection criteria that should be utilized when filling supervisory, managerial and executive positions in EPA and outlines methods for incorporating the criteria into Merit Promotion Announcements. This guidance is part of EPA's continuing effort to foster management excellence throughout the organization.

**BACKGROUND.** EPA has a comprehensive management development program which focuses on the three systems that directly impact the quality of the Agency's supervisors, managers and executives:

- <sup>0</sup>Recruitment and Selection
- <sup>0</sup>Training and Development
- <sup>0</sup>Appraisals and Awards

This program is based upon extensive studies of thousands of successful supervisors, managers and executives in the federal government and many hours of hard work by a cross-section of EPA employees concerned about management excellence. These efforts have led to the identification of a set of consistent criteria most important for success at each management level.

These criteria, hereafter referred to as "Management Excellence Criteria", reflect the Agency's position that a balance of technical and management skills is necessary for effective management at EPA. This mix of skills incorporates "what" functions a manager performs, "how" they are effectively accomplished, and the background and experience needed to have a broad perspective.

**OBJECTIVE.** Our objective is to institutionalize a more consistent approach to identifying and selecting supervisors, managers and executives with the skills needed to manage a complex, technical, decentralized federal agency.

**WHAT ISA MANAGER?**

A manager is someone who gets work done through others, which is very different from doing the work oneself as a technical analyst. Managing people involves a set of skills distinct from those required to do the programmatic work of the organization. An effective manager must perform competently in major functional areas such as supervision, representation and monitoring; must use certain characteristics to perform these functions effectively such as communication, interpersonal awareness and results focus; and finally must have varied experiences to have a broad perspective and strategic view.

As general guidance, there are three levels of management identifiable in EPA

Supervisor--generally first line - team, unit, section or equivalent level organizations. A supervisor needs technical competence to review the work of the group; and communication skills for motivating, coaching, counseling and keeping work relationships running smoothly.

**Mid-Level** Manager--someone who directs subordinate supervisors - usually Branch Chief or Deputy Division Director level. In addition to the skills of a supervisor, a manager must demonstrate leadership and flexibility in planning and coordinating the work products of several organizations.

Executive--Division Directors and above - an executive at EPA must have a broad perspective of various environmental and management issues, be able to represent his or her organization inside and outside the Agency, and show the ability to balance a variety of legislative and technical concerns in making policy and programmatic decisions.

**NOTE:** The generic term “manager” is used when referring to supervisors, mid-level managers and executives as a group.

**DISTINCTIONS BETWEEN MANAGEMENT LEVELS**

The concept of different levels of management with distinct functions and skills is the basis for the Management Excellence Criteria presented below. It is important to note, however, that these distinctions between the three management levels should not be used in a rigid fashion. They are based on a study of thousands of federal managers across government, and therefore must be applied to the requirements of each specific management position in EPA.

For example, although in general the representation function (i.e., presenting, explaining, selling the work unit's activities to management in the agency, and/or persons outside the agency) is more important at the executive level than the supervisory level, a particular supervisory job in EPA may have representation as a critical function.

The distinctions are useful as general guidance, but they do not preclude the need to carefully analyze the particular functions and skills required for each management position.

**MANAGEMENT EXCELLENCE CRITERIA**

a. **THE "WHAT" AND "HOW" OF MANAGEMENT**. There are twelve criteria which reflect the "what" or functional responsibilities of management positions, and nine criteria describing "how" managers are effective in performing these roles.

As a guide, the list below represents each of the criteria, and identifies those which have been found to be most important at each level, i.e., (S) for supervisors, (M) for mid-level managers, and (E) for executives.

**"WHAT" MANAGERS DO**

**"How" MANAGERS ARE EFFECTIVE**

Human Resources Management (E,M,S)	Communication (E,M,S)
Supervision (E,M,S)	Interpersonal Awareness (E,M,S)
Work Unit Guidance (E,M,S)	Leadership (E,M)

**“WHAT” MANAGERS DO (CONT'D)**

Work Unit Monitoring (E,M,S)  
 Coordination (E,M)  
 Work Unit Planning (E,M)  
 Budgeting (E,M)  
 Contracts/Resources  
 Administration (E,M)  
 Program Evaluation (E,M)  
 External Awareness (E)  
 Interpretation (E)  
 Representation (E)

**“How” MANAGERS ARE EFFECTIVE (CONT'D)**

**Flexibility (E,M)**  
 Action Orientation (E,M)  
 Results Focus (E,M)  
 Broad Perspective (E)  
 Strategic Review (E)  
 Organizational Sensitivity (E)

b. **BROAD-BASED BACKGROUND.** In addition to the functions and skills which describe “what” managers do and “how” they are effective, a broad-based background is of particular importance in a complex, decentralized agency with multiple cross-cutting issues like EPA. The following are examples of the types of experiences which provide such a background:

- (1) Headquarters and field experience.
- (2) Policy and operations experience.
- (3) Staff and line experience.
- (4) Experience in more than one environmental program.
- (5) Experience in more than one administrative field (budget, finance, human resources).
- (6) Experience in more than one organization (Federal, state and local government, executive, legislative and judicial branch private sector, academia).
- (7) Participation in Agencywide task forces or committees.
- (8) Education, training, or experience with professional associations.
- (9) Teaching courses in the EPA Institute.

The importance of a broad base of experience will vary for each particular job. As a general rule, it becomes increasingly important at each higher level of management. However, even first-line supervisors are likely to be involved in issues that cut across media, headquarters and regions, etc.

c. **TECHNICAL COMPETENCE.** At EPA technical competence is critical to achieving the agency's mission. There are two aspects to technical competence. First, there is the specialized expertise required for certain positions, such as engineering, law, accounting, and contract administration. The second aspect of technical competence is specific programmatic knowledge needed to be effective, such as knowledge of RCRA, drinking water standards, or clean air standards.

Applicants for positions which have specific technical requirements are not considered unless they meet these standards, as established by the Office of Personnel Management and EPA for each position.

This guidance recognizes that effective management requires a set of skills in addition to the technical expertise required for a managerial position. For example, a technically brilliant chemist will not be an effective manager if he/she is poor at communicating to staff or planning the work of the division.

Likewise, it is recognized that an individual with outstanding communication and planning skills will not be an effective manager if he/she does not understand the technical issues at hand.

There is no magic formula for determining the appropriate balance of technical and management skills for a job, although as a general rule technical expertise tends to be relatively more important at the supervisory level than at the mid-level manager and executive level. The most important message in this guidance is that close attention must be paid to both types of skills when identifying the requirements for a managerial position and assessing the capabilities of applicants against these standards.

**SELECTION PROCEDURES**

**a. USE OF MANAGEMENT EXCELLENCE CRITERIA IN QUALITY RANKING**

**FACTORS AND RATING PLANS.** The specification of quality ranking factors (commonly referred to as Knowledges, Skills and Abilities - KSAS) for a vacant position is

one of the keys to incorporating the Management Excellence Criteria in the Agency's hiring process for supervisors, managers and executives. Quality ranking factors are generally determined by a subject matter expert, designated by the selecting official, in consultation with the servicing human resources office.

Quality ranking factors are used to differentiate between those applicants who have met the minimum technical requirements for the job. For example, consider a Division Director job in an EPA research laboratory. The job announcement first lists the qualification requirements, which are the minimum official technical standards set by OPM (e.g. biology degree), and any minimum requirements set by EPA (e.g. knowledge of research methods).

Another section on the job announcement may list the factors to be used in selecting the best applicant from those meeting the minimum technical requirements. This is the point at which this guidance recommends incorporation of appropriate Management Excellence Criteria, such as:

- (1) Supervision
- (2) Communication
- (3) Work Unit Monitoring

These criteria would then be developed into quality ranking factors by developing a rating plan for each criteria which assigns points based on the expertise demonstrated in an applicant's SF-171. In addition, each quality ranking factor is assigned a weight, reflecting the relative importance of each factor to the job.

**b. FLEXIBILITY IN USE OF MANAGEMENT EXCELLENCE CRITERIA. Although there is no set of mandatory or prescribed ranking factors for any supervisory or managerial position at EPA, this guidance reflects the Agency's expectation that the human resources specialists and the selecting official work together to ensure an appropriate balance of technical and management skills needed to do the job.**

**c. MANAGEMENT EXCELLENCE CRITERIA MODEL. As a guideline, the following model should be used to ensure the desired balance:**

**(1) "Rateable" Management Excellence Criteria. Use of at least two of the rateable Management Excellence Criteria as quality ranking factors. Although there is a total of twenty-one management excellence criteria listed, not all of them are easily "rateable" or lend themselves to being quantified in a rating plan.**

**For example, the rateable criteria that are typically most important at the supervisory level are human resources management, supervision, communication, and work unit guidance and monitoring. At least two of these (or others on the list that may be appropriate for a particular job) should be selected and developed into quality ranking factors.**

**(2) "Non-Rateable" Management Excellence Criteria. Use of model interview questions in assessing best qualified candidates' abilities related to the non-rateable criteria. As noted above, eight of the excellence criteria do not easily lend themselves to rating plans (e.g. interpersonal sensitivity, flexibility, strategic view), and will not often be used in the initial ranking of applicants. If a selecting official chooses to interview applicants, however, information about their abilities with regard to these qualitative criteria can be elicited. Model interview questions which may be used when interviewing candidates are provided on pages 10 through 16 of this Appendix. Because of the importance of these qualitative criteria to effective management, selecting officials are strongly encouraged to use the interview option.**



**(3) Model interview questions should be used as a guide when discussing applicants with previous employers, colleagues and references. The model questions are written so that they can easily be used to structure discussions with an applicant's previous employers, colleagues and references. These discussions are an invaluable source of information on applicants.**

**(4) Broad-Based Background Criteria. A quality ranking factor should be used that addresses the variety of an applicant's background and experience.** Because of the importance of this criterion at EPA, it should be represented in the quality ranking factors. The rating plan should demonstrate a broad base of experience by satisfaction of any one or a combination of the examples provided on page 4.

**(5) Use of Other Criteria as Quality Ranking Factors. While this model should be followed, additional factors may be used, as appropriate.** Adherence to the above model will result in the use of at least three of the Management Excellence Criteria for every vacant management position in EPA (two factors from the rateable criteria, and one from the Broad-Based Background criteria). This guidance does not preclude adding additional ranking factors that may be important for a particular job.

**SUPPLEMENTAL STATEMENT.** For each vacancy announcement filled under this guidance, a supplemental statement addressing each of the quality ranking factors should be required from each applicant. This requirement will reinforce the need for applicants for EPA management positions to provide evidence of their competence regarding the Management Excellence Criteria, and will assist selecting officials in their assessments.

**MANAGEMENT EXCELLENCE CRITERIA DEFINITIONS**

**E = Executive**

**M = Mid-Level Manager**

**S = Supervisor**

**Rateable Criteria**

**(E,M,S) Human Resources Management:** Projecting the number and types of staff needed by the work unit, and using various personnel management system components (e.g. recruitment, selection, promotion, performance appraisal, EEO, Affirmative Action) in managing the work unit.

**(E,M,S) Supervision:** Providing day-to-day guidance and oversight of subordinates (e.g. work assignments, coaching, counseling, etc.); and actively working to promote and recognize performance.

**(E,M,S) Speaking,** writing, listening.

**(E,M,S) Work Unit Guidance:** Converting plans to actions by setting short-term objectives and priorities; scheduling/sequencing activities; and establishing effectiveness and efficiency standards/guidelines.

**(E,M,S) Work Unit Monitoring:** Keeping up-to-date on the overall status of activities in the work unit, identifying problem areas, and taking corrective actions (e.g. rescheduling, reallocating resources, etc.).

**(E,M) Coordination:** Performing liaison functions and integrating work unit activities with the activities of other organizations.

**(E,M) Work Unit Planning:** Developing and deciding upon longer-term goals, objectives, and priorities; and developing and deciding among alternative courses of action.

**MANAGEMENT EXCELLENCE CRITERIA DEFINITIONS**

**Rateable Criteria *Cont'd***

**(E,M) Budgeting** Preparing, justifying, and/or administering the work unit's budget.

**(E,M) Contracts/Resources Administration:** Assuring the availability of adequate supplies and equipment; ADP hardware/software; facilities; overseeing procurement./contracting activities; and/or overseeing logistical operations.

**(E,M) Program Evaluation:** Critically assessing the degree to which program/project goals are achieved and the overall effectiveness/efficiency of work unit operations, to identify means for improving work unit performance.

**(E) External Awareness:** Identifying and keeping up-to-date with key agency policies and priorities and/or external issues and trends (e.g. economic, political, social, technological) likely to affect the work unit.

**(E) Intermetation:** Keeping subordinates informed about key agency and work unit policies, priorities, issues and trends and how these are to be incorporated in work unit activities and products.

**(E) Representation:** Presenting, explaining, selling and defending the work unit's activities to the supervisor in the agency, and/or persons and groups outside the agency.

***Non-Rateable Criteria***

**(E,M,S) Interpersonal Awareness:** Self-knowledge and awareness of effect on others; sensitivity to needs, strengths, and weaknesses of others; negotiation, conflict resolution; persuasion, selling.

**MANAGEMENT EXCELLENCE CRITERIA DEFINITIONS**

***Non-Rateable Criteria Cont'd***

**(E,M) Leadership** Willingness to lead and manage individuals and groups.

**(E,M) Flexibility:** Openness to new information; behavioral flexibility tolerance for stress, ambiguity and change; innovativeness.

**(E,M) Action Orientation:** Independence and proactive attitude; calculated risk-taking; accepting responsibility; decisiveness.

**(E,M) Results Focus:** Concerned with goal achievement; **follow-through;** tenacity.

**(E) Broad Perspective:** Broad, long-term view; balancing **short and long-term** considerations.

**(E) Strategic View,** Collecting, assessing and analyzing information; diagnosis and problem solving; anticipation and judgement.

**(E) Organizational Sensitivity:** Being “tuned in” to the Agency and its environment; awareness of the importance of non-technical factors.

**MODEL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR NON-RATEABLE  
MANAGEMENT EXCELLENCE CRITERIA**

These interview questions should be used in the interview process and when discussing applicants with previous employers and references to gain insight into the qualitative or personal characteristics important for effective management in EPA.

**Board Perspective**

(Board, long-term view; balancing short and long-term considerations).

1. What do you consider to be the day-to-day tasks associated with your **present job**?
2. What are the longer range considerations? How have you planned to accomplish them? Which did you consider most important?
3. What do you do to balance these competing considerations?

**Strategic View**

(Collecting/assessing/analyzing information; diagnosis, problem-solving; anticipation, judgment.)

1. Describe a technical problem in which you had to use your analytical **skills**.
2. Describe a special project/task assignment that you feel required you to make a major decision. How did you go about arriving at your decision?
3. Describe a major obstacle which you have had to overcome in any of your past jobs. How did you deal with it?

**Strategic View Cent'd**

4. Describe a situation when you had to make a decision or take action on an issue in which no policy existed.

5. In a crisis/emergency situation that you might have experienced, how did you go about identifying the causes? What steps did you take in solving it?

6. How far ahead do you anticipate future events? Do your long-range plans allow for unscheduled events and are they realistic?

**Organizational Sensitivity**

(Sensitivity to and awareness of agency needs and its environment; awareness of importance of non-technical factors, such as organizational dynamics.)

**1. How do you keep yourself informed about what is going on in your organization a level above you? A level below you?**

2. What do you consider to be your best sources of information about what is going on in the Agency?

**Leadership**

(Individual; group; willingness to lead and manage.)

**1. Describe your leadership style.**

**2. Describe what you consider to be a good leader. What changes do you feel you would need to be a good leader?**

**3. What is your philosophy for delegating responsibility to others? Give an example of when you have delegated responsibility while you were in a leadership role.**

**Leadership Cent'd**

**4. What would you say are your strengths in leading others? What are your weaknesses?**

**5. Describe an example of a leadership role you have held that you actively sought.**

**Flexibility**

**(Openness to new information; behavioral flexibility; tolerance for stress/ambiguity/change; innovativeness.)**

**1. How does waiting for an important decision from higher management affect you? How would you cope with it?**

**2. Would you consider your style as a manager to be formal or informal? Describe a situation where you had to use the opposite management style. How did you feel about it?**

**3. Describe a work situation that required you to work with people you found difficult to work with. How did you deal with the conflict/confrontation?**

**4. Give an example of your innovativeness in which you successfully resolved a work related problem.**

**5. Describe a stressful situation you have encountered in your job. How did you cope with it?**

**6. How do you deal with constant change (program, budget, office environment)?**

**7. Describe a situation in which your carefully laid plans did not materialize as expected. What strategy did you use to reformulate your plans?**

**Action Orientation**

(Independence, proactivity; calculated risk-taking, accepting responsibility, decisiveness.)

1. What kinds of decisions do you make on your own?
2. What kinds of recommendations do you make to your supervisor?
3. Tell me about a difficult problem that you had to solve independently. How did you put together a plan to solve it? What kind of recommendations did you propose? Were they accepted? If not, why? How did you keep management informed?

**Results Focus**

(Concerned with goal achievement; follow-through, tenacity)

1. What process do you use to set goals? Do you have a specific process that you would use to achieve your goals?
2. How did you get other people (subordinate staff and management) to buy into goals you have set?
3. Describe an example of a goal you achieved and how it related to the mission of your organization.
4. Tell me about a goal you failed to meet. What happened? How did you feel?



**Interpersonal Awareness**

(Self knowledge and awareness of impact on others; sensitivity to needs/strengths/weaknesses of other; negotiation, conflict resolution; persuasion, selling.)

1. Describe a situation in which a subordinate did some work which you endorsed, but which was ultimately not accepted. How did you communicate to the employee what had happened?

2. Did you ever have to sell an unpopular position (or decision) to your staff? What did you do to prepare yourself to discuss it? What did you feel would be the concerns of your staff? Did you anticipate accurately?

3. How would your colleagues describe your sensitivity to their needs?

4. How do you deal with assigning work to an employee whose weaknesses would likely impair the quality of the product?

5. How do you view the role of staff meetings? How do you conduct a staff meeting?

6. Have you ever had to tell an applicant that he or she was not selected for a job? Someone on your staff? How did you so it? What did you say?

7. Describe examples of employees or colleagues seeking your guidance on career decisions or major problems facing them at work.